

**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS AND REHABILITATION
DELTA FIRE CAMP
2008-2009 Solano Grand Jury Report**

REASON FOR INSPECTION

California Penal Code section §919 Section (b) provides: "The Grand Jury shall inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons within the county." Pursuant to the statute, the 2008-2009 Grand Jury inspected the Delta Fire Camp.

GRAND JURY ACTIONS

- Interviewed management and staff
- Inspected and toured the fire camp
- Reviewed maintenance procedures of equipment
- Spoke to inmates

BACKGROUND / SUMMARY

The Delta Fire Camp was established in 1998 and is located on 23 acres in the rural area of Solano County on Lambie Road. The camp is a collaborative effort between the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) and the California Department of Forestry (CDF). The camp is one of 24 in the state of California, 18 of which are located in Northern California. Delta is an all-adult male camp. The inmates are classified level one and level two, minimum security risk. The capacity is 135. At the present time, there are 132 inmates at the camp. Inmate/Workers are paid on a scale that relates to their job description; \$1.45 a day for laborers to \$3.90 a day for one lead cooks. When the inmates are employed under emergency conditions such as fire and flood, they are paid at the rate of \$1.00 an hour.

At the time of this inspection, the intersection of Highway 12 and Lambie Road, which is the main access to the Camp, had no left hand turn lane onto Lambie Road or a merge lane from Lambie Road onto Highway 12. This is a serious safety issue for the CDF trucks that come and go from the camp and an issue of safety for the public that drive on Highway 12.

The Grand Jury found the Camp to be in good condition. The grounds and buildings were well groomed under the supervision of the Correctional Lieutenant and the CAL-FIRE Division and Battalion Chiefs. The departments have formed a working relationship that is beneficial to the taxpayers of California. Inmates are taught useful skills that are transferable to employment in the community upon their release or parole. Inmates who participate in the camp program, must be physically fit, cannot have more than 7 years on their sentence, nor can they have been convicted of any capital crimes, sex crimes or domestic violence. After meeting these requirements each inmate must meet CAL-FIRES' requirement of 67 hours of training which is the same training that an entry-level fire fighter receives.

During their stay at the Camp, inmates must undergo continuous training in addition to the performance of their other duties. Continuous training helps to maintain the high standards of safety for the inmates and Cal-fire personnel. The main purpose of the Camp is to fight fires. During 2007, the average fire hours logged per fire crew was 9,121. There are 15 fire crews at Delta Camp. During 2008, the number of fire hours logged increased to approximately 9,261. Delta Camp crews maintain and repair all of their equipment.

When not assigned to emergency response or pre-fire project work, crews conduct labor-intensive work on public land. Fire crews conduct hazardous fuel reduction projects in support of the state and federal fire plan. Fire crews also perform repair and maintenance of levees for flood prevention, maintenance of local, state and federal park infrastructures, clearing debris from streams, removing roadside litter, constructing hiking trails and providing many other important community services. This service has saved Solano County in excess of \$880,000. This service is of great value to the taxpayers of the county.

While housed at this facility inmates are able to obtain their GED or continue their education and receive an AA degree from Feather River College. During 2008, one inmate has graduated and received his degree.

The correctional administration holds each inmate responsible to maintain his clothing. Appropriate action is taken if any article of clothing appears to have been intentionally destroyed. The cost of that article is taken from the inmate's earnings upon parole or release. Inmates understand that issued clothing is the property of the state and that it is the responsibility of each inmate to take care of the clothing issued to them.

Delta Camp is understaffed by two correctional staff positions. This results in only one officer being assigned between the hours of 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. This single officer is responsible for the whole camp during the graveyard shift, which is a concern to administrative staff.

The issue of inmate grooming standards was addressed by administrative staff. The Grand Jury was informed that standards involving haircuts and facial hair were dropped as a result of a successful inmate lawsuit, which involved all prisons in the California system including the Fire Camps. Excessive hair length and facial hair pose a hazard when fighting fires.

Delta Camp staff has indicated that Camp security would be enhanced with the addition of cameras on the perimeter of the camp. Contraband from outside the Camp has been left along the camp perimeter for pick up by inmates.

Camp staff also expressed concern regarding the age of the equipment used by CAL- FIRE. Trucks are not routinely replaced after being in use for long periods of time nor are the trucks designed for the off-road conditions they are required to operate within.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding 1 - The shortage of correctional officers at Delta camp is an issue that can affect officer and inmate safety.

Recommendation 1- To enhance officer and inmate safety, Delta Camp should have the two open correctional officers positions filled as soon as possible.

Finding 2- The absence of security cameras around the perimeter of Delta Camp poses a serious security issue.

Recommendation 2-- Security cameras should be installed on the perimeters and inside the camp to discourage the introduction of contraband.

Finding 3- The current absence of grooming standards for inmates poses a safety hazard to inmates and staff while fighting fires.

Recommendation 3- CDCR and CAL-Fire should lobby the legislature to apply a separate set of regulations governing grooming standards for inmates employed at fire camps.

Finding 4 - The design of the intersection of Highway 12 and Lambie Road poses a serious safety problem.

Recommendation 4- The intersection should include a turn lane onto Lambie Road from East bound Highway 12 along with a lane to accelerate onto and merge in the West Bound Highway 12.

Finding 5- Fire fighting is a hazardous activity that requires modern well-maintained equipment. Much of the equipment used at Delta Camp was found to be antiquated, have excessive mileage and not designed for off-road use. These vehicles have had to operate in some very rugged terrain, as well as operating for thousands of miles on highways.

Recommendation 5 - When equipment used by CAL-FIRE becomes outmoded to the point that it becomes a danger for use on the fire line, it should be replaced. CAL-FIRE equipment should be designed to fit the terrain encountered by these firefighters, which includes both on and off-road conditions.

COMMENTS

The Grand Jury has noted that more modern equipment is required at Delta Camp. However, it should be noted that the inmate maintenance staff and supervisors are very diligent and successful in their efforts to keep the equipment in good working order.

Delta Camp is well run by the combined staff of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and Cal Fire. They have a good working relationship and are very conscientious about the welfare of each other and welfare of the inmates, but more importantly, they take seriously their duty to the citizens of the State of California and County of Solano.

RESPONDING AND AFFECTED AGENCIES

California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation
California Department of Forestry
Solano Transportation Authority
California Department of Transportation

COURTESY COPIES

California State 8th Assembly District
California State 5th Senatorial District
Solano County Board of Supervisors
Solano County Administrator
Benicia City Council
Dixon City Council
Fairfield City Council
Suisun City City Council
Rio Vista City Council
Vacaville City Council
Vallejo City Council

**DIVISION OF ADULT INSTITUTIONS
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March 2, 2010

Honorable D. Scott Daniels
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
Solano Superior Court
600 Union Ave
Fairfield CA 94533

RE: 2009-2010 Delta Conservation Camp Grand Jury Report

Dear Honorable Judge Daniels:

Pursuant to Penal Code Section 933.05, I am providing a response to the Solano County Grand Jury of the Findings and Recommendations for Delta Conservation Camp. These responses are regarding the 2009-2010 Grand Jury Report Entitled: California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) – Delta Conservation Camp – 2009/2010 Solano Grand Jury Report, Report Date: February 5, 2010.

I would like to begin by thanking the Grand Jury of Solano County for their continued support of Delta Conservation Camp. The staff at the camp look forward to the Grand Jury's visit each year. There are, however, several inaccurate statements contained within the Grand Jury report that I would like to clarify.

Delta Conservation Camp opened in June 1988 and is one (1) of 39 California camps, jointly run by CDCR and CAL FIRE. There are 18 such camps in Northern California. Delta Conservation Camp employs six (6) inmate fire crews, consisting of up to 17 male inmates per crew. The maximum occupancy of the camp is 132 inmates. Inmates participating in the camp program, have seven (7) and one-half years, or less, remaining on their sentences. These inmates cannot have crimes consisting of any capital offenses, sex crimes or arson. In addition, no prior escapes within the past 10 years. Inmates incarcerated for domestic violence are potentially eligible for camp once their case factors have been reviewed by the Unit Classification Committee.

The figures and dollar amounts specified in the Grand Jury Report demonstrate a substantial savings to California taxpayers, but are attributable to the statewide conservation camp program. Delta Conservation Camp has been a vital participant in achieving these savings.

Inmates assigned to conservation camps receive the benefit of pursuing GED and college education. These pursuits are facilitated through California Correctional Center and the Lassen County Board of Education, via correspondence course work and not "on line" as indicated in the Grand Jury Report. Inmates never utilize computers with modems or internet capability.

The six (6) trucks, utilized by CAL FIRE Captains to transport the inmate crews, are formally referred to as Emergency Crew Transport(s) or ECT.

The Grand Jury Report has referenced four (4) areas of concern within the operation of Delta Conservation Camp and surrounding area. CDCR has control of two (2) of the listed areas of concern. A third area of concern addressed a Highway 12 road project at the intersection of Highway 12 and Lambie Road. That project is currently a work in progress. A fourth area of concern was simply a recommendation for local cities and Solano County departments to pursue utilization of Delta Conservation Camp's crews for public works projects. The responses to CDCR's affected areas of concern are as follows:

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding 1 – The lack of security cameras around the perimeter of Delta Conservation Camp poses a serious security issue.

Recommendation 1 – Security cameras should be installed on the perimeter for overall security and safety and to discourage the introduction of contraband.

Response 1 – Given the current state fiscal emergency, funds cannot be allocated for the security cameras. Once the fiscal emergency is over and funds become available, consideration will be given to purchase security cameras for the camp.

Finding 2 – One correctional officer on the graveyard shift with no backup is cause for considerable concern and presents a severe security problem. The officer's safety and welfare could be in serious jeopardy, as there is a minimum 20 minute response time from California State Prison Solano (CSP-S) staff to provide help in an emergency.

Recommendation 2 – The CDCR staff should make every effort to hire a second correctional officer for graveyard shift at Delta Conservation Camp. Contact should also be made with the Solano County Sheriff's Office to ensure a procedure is negotiated to expedite prompt help for camp personnel during the graveyard shift as needed.

Finding 2 – CDCR, and specifically Delta Conservation Camp, employs several operational protocols, including, but not limited to, escape pursuits, emergency preparedness, and disturbance control. These protocols are formatted into specific procedural manuals or Operational Guidelines. Each manual or guideline outlines a specific course of action to be taken, relative to every level of circumstance. Existing procedures governing external assistance from local institutions, emergency response from local law enforcement, and requests for mutual aid are in place. CDCR has established that all safety and security concerns at the camp can be efficiently addressed with current staffing levels.

Honorable Judge Garrett
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In closing, Delta Conservation Camp is committed to being an integral part of Solano County. We look forward to future visits from the Solano County Grand Jury.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, at (530) 257-2181, extension 4104.

Sincerely,

Original signed by:

R. E. BARNES
Warden